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# Wisdom and Emptiness

**Arjia Rinpoche**

The practice of wisdom examines the nature of self and all phenomena. This necessitates analytical meditation which, in turn, depends upon a mind that is concentrated, stable and calm.

Upon examining the nature of self and all phenomena, the meditator experiences that all is constantly changing and that what appears to be “so” in one moment is “not so” in the next instance. What is once a seed becomes a plant and then is woven into a rope. A drop of water becomes a stream, which is now a river, then is taken up by the sun and finally falls to earth again as rain. There is constant flow: one thing passes into another. Likewise, the self comes and the self goes.

You never live by yourself. You always live within a family, a society, or culture. You constantly interact with others. Everything and everyone is connected. Our karma, our actions give rise to causes and conditions that create our universes: exterior, physical, and interior

As the Buddha explained about karma (action):

When this is, that is  
 From the arising of this, comes the arising of that  
 When this isn't, that isn't  
 From the cessation of this, comes the cessation of that

The meditator realizes this interdependence -- this interconnection -- by examining the composition of the outer universe, his own universe of the five aggregates, and the inner universe of his mind

He sees that the external universe is comprised of 5 elements: earth, water, fire, wind, and space. Just so, our individual universe, our “self” is composed of 5 aggregates. The first aggregate – our human body or form -- corresponds to the elements of the outer universe: Exactly like the world, we live in, our body is made up of earth (matter), water (fluids), fire (temperature), wind (energy of the breath), and space (that which is in between). In addition, our five senses symbolize the 5 elements: space is sight, water is sound, earth is smell, fire is taste, and air is touch.

Likewise, the inner universe of the mind has 5 positive and 5 negative characteristics that correspond to the 5 elements of the outer world and to the aggregate of form with its five senses.

- Earth (matter and smell) is the virtue of equality and its opposite, the delusion of pride.
- Water (fluids and sound) embodies mirror-like wisdom and its opposite, anger or hatred.
- Fire (temperature and taste) stands for discriminating wisdom and conversely, desire or lust.
- Wind (breath and touch) is attuned to all-accomplishing wisdom and the delusion of jealousy or fear.
- Space (sight and that which is in between) stands for all encompassing wisdom and its opposite, ignorance and delusion.

All of our universes -- the outer, the bodily, and the inner -- mirror each other. All are interconnected in corresponding relationships.

When the meditator is able to experience all of these connections, he is able realize the Emptiness of an Independent Self and the Emptiness of All Phenomena. He has obtained wisdom. This wisdom necessitates compassion since the meditator cannot be happy in an ocean of suffering. That is not possible.